

The American Baptist Historical Society
Miss Ann C. Judd.

OCT 10 1939

THE DISCOVERY OF AMERICA.

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED ON

COLUMBUS DAY,

OCTOBER 21st, 1892,

IN THE

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH,

PHILADELPHIA.

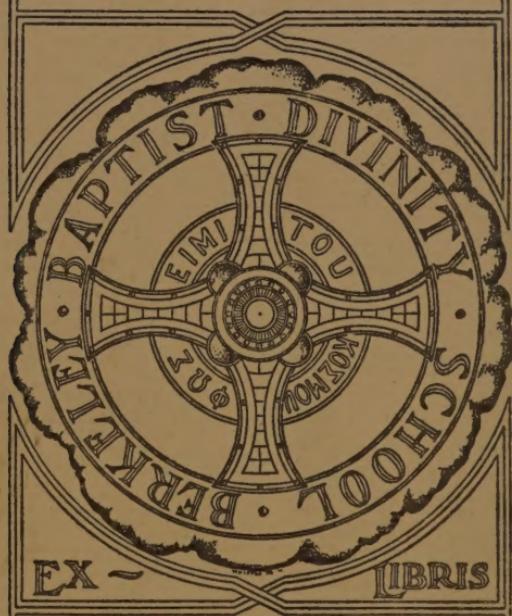
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THE DISCOVERY OF AMERICA.

GATHERED as we are, in answer to the invitation of our Chief Magistrate, to commemorate the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus, it is meet, first of all, that we recall as briefly as possible the story of this discovery.

Problem of the Original Discovery. Not that it was, strictly speaking, a discovery; it was rather a re-discovery. For America had already been inhabited we know not how many centuries, or even milleniums of centuries. For, believing as I do the Bible account of the origin of man, these American aborigines must have come in some way or another from the land of Eden. Did they pass from Asia to America before these continents were separated by Behring Strait? Did they drift with the winds across the Atlantic? Did these forerunners of Columbus purposely look for a new world? Were the Northmen the original re-discoverers? These and similar questions are fascinating problems which no geographer or ethnologist has yet been able to solve. Meanwhile, what we know is this; Christopher Columbus was the great

re-discoverer of America. And now let us take a swift survey of the outlines of that re-discovery, or, as I will henceforth say, discovery.

Outline of Columbus' Career.

Outlines, I say; for although Columbus is one of the imposing figures in history, yet many of the details of his career are so lost in the obscurity of a far-off and misty age that it is impossible to reproduce them with certainty; possibly, even the mists themselves sometimes magnify his personality. For the following details I am chiefly indebted to Prof. John Fiske's learned and eloquent work, entitled "The Discovery of America." Born of humble Italian parents, in the city of Genoa, probably about the year 1436; gaining some knowledge of Latin, astronomy, geography, mathematics, and drawing, perhaps at the University of Pavia; ever and anon, in the course of his youth, making adventurous voyages on the Mediterranean, as was natural for one born at the seaport of Genoa; about the year 1470 removing to Lisbon, Portugal, which had already become the "chief centre of nautical science in Europe," where, with his younger brother, Bartholomew, to meet a sudden and growing demand, he earned his bread by making maps, charts, and globes; wedding, at the age of thirty-seven, Philippa, "the charming daughter" of the skillful Italian navigator, Perestrelo; beginning to believe,

or at least to cherish, the sublime idea that the eastern coast of Asia might be reached by sailing from Europe westward ; appealing to King John II. of Portugal for aid in trying this westward route to Asia, but unsuccessfully, because his scheme was deemed visionary ; forsaking Portugal for Spain, where he entered the service of Ferdinand and Isabella, vainly imploring their endorsement of his enterprise ; offering fruitless overtures to the courts of England and France ; for nearly a score of years seeking interviews at the courts and banks and monasteries of Portugal and Spain, but repulsed, even laughed at by the urchins of the streets as a harmless madman ; prematurely aging, yet dauntless in his heroic enthusiasm ; at length, cheered by the hospitality of Juan Perez, prior of the Monastery of La Rabida, through whose friendly offices he was summoned to lay his plans before Queen Isabella ; angering Her Majesty by the extravagance of his demands for reward in case his expedition should prove successful ; haughtily turning his back on the court, and indomitably starting again for France ; returning to the Spanish court in answer to a sudden summons from Isabella ; negotiating with the royal court an agreement signed April 17th, 1492, among the terms of which were that he should have for himself during his life, and for his heirs forever, the office of admiral in all the islands and continents which he might discover, and that he should be viceroy and

governor-general over all the said islands and continents, and that he should be entitled to reserve for himself one-tenth of all precious stones, gold, silver, spices, and all other treasures discovered or gained within his admiralty (every penny of which he vowed to devote to the rescue of the Holy Sepulchre); furnished with three caravels or tiny ships, named the "Santa Maria" (his own flagship), the "Pinta," and the "Nina," conveying ninety persons; setting sail from Palos, Spain, half an hour before sunrise, Friday, August 3rd, 1492; steering, as he imagined and believed, for Japan and the east coast of Asia; prospered with a favoring breeze, yet disappointed in not sooner reaching Asia; quieting the forebodings of his crews by understating each day the distance made the previous; startled about October 4th by a threat that he would be thrown overboard; indomitably holding to his westward course in spite of disappointment and signs of general mutiny; overjoyed by the shout of "Land ahead!" at two o'clock, Friday morning, October 12th (New Style, October 21st), 1492; debarking at daybreak, and devoutly calling the island where he landed San Salvador; deserted by Martin Pinzon, the captain of the "Pinta;" discovering the island of Hayti, and naming it Hispaniola (Spanish Land), believing it to be Japan; disheartened by the wreck of his own flagship, the "Santa Maria;" starting for his homeward course in the little "Nina," January 4th, 1493; after a stormy voy-

age again reaching Palos, March 15th; welcomed with triumphal honors by the court and people of Spain because they believed that he had discovered a shorter way to the gold and gems and spices of the Indies and Cathay; easily securing men and money for his second voyage; sailing from Cadiz September 25th, 1493, with seventeen ships and fifteen hundred men; after a pleasant voyage of six weeks, sighting land along the Caribbean Sea; discovering many islands, such as Dominica, Antigua, Guadaloupe, Porto Rico, Jamaica, still cherishing the belief that he was skirting the east shore of Asia; discovering in the south part of Hayti some gold mines, which awakened the surmise that after all the island was not Japan, but King Solomon's Land of Ophir; returning to Spain in March, 1496, to answer the charge that his government as admiral and viceroy had been tyrannical; learning to his chagrin that the court had issued an edict granting to other navigators the right of making expeditions westward to the coast of Asia, a right which he had supposed was to be reserved for himself alone; after vexatious delays, setting sail again for his third voyage, May 30th, 1498, steering southwest, and discovering the South American Trinidad and Orinoco outlet, which he imagined to be "Eden Land;" returning to Hispaniola (Hayti), and finding the island in the possession of rebels and personal enemies; stung by the news that the Portuguese navigator, Vasco da Gama, had sailed

around the west coast of Africa, doubled the Cape of Good Hope, and actually reached the west coast of Hindustan ; superseded as viceroy of the Indies by one Bobadilla, a minion of his desperate enemy, Fonseca, principal chaplain to the royal court ; arrested in August, 1500, by this Bobadilla, and sent back in chains to Spain ; released, and received in the Alhambra by Isabella with pathetic demonstrations of honor ; setting sail from Cadiz for his fourth and last voyage May 11th, 1502, still persisting in the belief that the West Indies or American Archipelago, which he had discovered, was the same as the East Indies, or Asiatic Archipelago, for which he had started ; fruitlessly searching along the Caribbean coast for the Strait of Malacca ; shipwrecked on the coast of Jamaica ; returning once more to Spain, broken in health and in spirit ; dying at Valladolid in obscurity and poverty, May 20th, 1506 ; buried first at Valladolid, then at Seville, then at San Domingo, then at Havana, where his dust still probably lies. This is the outline story of Christopher Columbus.

Outline of Columbus' Character. And a noble story it is : for it is the exaltation of a noble character. And so we pass from this swift outline of the career of Columbus to an equally swift outline of his character.

And first a few words as to his personal aspect. He is

said to have been a man of commanding presence, tall and strongly built, "with fair, ruddy complexion and keen blue-gray eyes that easily kindled," courteous in manner, fascinating in speech, aglow with an intense enthusiasm, impressive with the indefinable authoritativeness of a grand aspiration.

As to his mental gifts and acquisitions it is not needful to say a great deal. He was not exceptionally great in the intellectual sense of the word. His native endowment was strong: but his learning was meagre; his philosophy was mystical; his logic was fallacious; his conclusion was grotesque. For observe precisely what in this matter of discovery Columbus did, or rather what he did not do. He was not, as we so often imagine, the first to conceive and prove that the earth is round; that idea, Professor Fiske assures us, is as old as Aristotle. He did not sail westward prompted by the belief that he would discover in the western hemisphere a new continent, or, to use the modern phrase, a New World. But he sailed from Palos in the belief that if he continued his course with the setting sun long enough he would finally come round to the east shore of Asia. He lived and died in the conviction that what he had discovered was a direct westward passage to what is now known as the East Indies. In brief, undertaking to find an ocean-way westward to the east coast of the continent of Asia, he providentially stumbled on the islands skirting the east coast of the continent of

America, never dreaming that it was the coast of a New World. In this intellectual respect (to use language suggested by *Maria's* forged letter in "Twelfth Night"), Columbus was not among those who are born great, nor among those who consciously achieve greatness, but among those who subsequently have greatness thrust upon them. How immense that greatness was we shall see later on.

Meanwhile, let us reverently acknowledge that in the moral sphere Columbus was truly great. Not that he was by any means a perfect character. He was ambitious, avaricious, cruel, deceitful, despotic, superstitious. Our friends of the Latin Church had better wait awhile before they canonize or even beatify him. Nevertheless, let us not be so cruel or unjust as to judge him by modern tests. Neither Calvin nor Luther nor Augustine nor Peter nor David nor Abraham can altogether afford to be scanned in the full blaze of our nearly twentieth century. It may be that four hundred years from to-day even the saints of this generation will need merciful biographers.

Nevertheless, Christopher Columbus moved in a conspicuously moral realm. Geographically mistaken, he was spiritually right. He lived amid ideas; he was drawn forward by ideals. If he was ambitious, it was that he might benefit his fellowmen. If he was cruel, it was that he might bring mercy to many. If he was deceitful, it was that he might propa-

gate what he believed to be the truth. If he was avaricious, it was that he might advance the interests of what he felt to be the only true religion. To open a new and better way of commerce to the far-off East, and to plant on those pagan shores the standard of the Holy Cross, was his sublime aspiration, his unconquerable purpose. For a man's moral force is better measured by the obstacles he overcomes than by the speed with which he runs. Recall now the many and terrible obstacles which Columbus had to overcome--obstacles of mediaeval ignorance, such as false conception, false tradition, false philosophy, false science, and, above all, false maps; obstacles of poverty, indifference, misconception, repulse, obloquy, jealousy, hostility; obstacles of delay, disappointment, uncertainty, mutiny, treachery, superstition, hardship, ill-health, failure. And yet how bravely, how sublimely, and, in the moral sense, how victoriously he battled with it all for more than a quarter of a century! How grandly the late laureate, prophet-interpreter for human hearts, has portrayed him in his poet-picture of the Admiral of the Ocean in Chains! And the secret of his greatness was that he had supreme, overcoming confidence in an idea. If ever a man walked by faith, not by sight, that man was Christopher Columbus. For it is of the very essence of faith that it is rooted in darkness; if it were rooted in light, it would not be faith; it would be sight. "Faith is assurance of things hoped for, a

conviction of things not seen." So far as Columbus knew, no one had ever crossed the Atlantic Ocean, or even heard that it had any west coast at all. True, Norsemen had long before crossed northern portions of the Atlantic, and discovered Iceland, Greenland, and Vinland. But there is no evidence, so far as I am aware, that Columbus had ever heard of these discoveries. If he had, then of course he is not entitled to the unique glory of being the great discoverer. No; Columbus was inspired by faith, not by sight, not even by science. True, the science of his day, in admitting that the earth is a sphere, admitted the possibility that the Atlantic had somewhere a west boundary, having, of course, an east coast. But the possibility was regarded as a theory rather than as a fact. Whereas Columbus believed the theory to be a fact; and he believed it so supremely that he devoted all the resources of his strong manhood—physical, mental, moral—to the discovery of that far-off western shore. He did not know where that shore lay, but he believed that it lay somewhere westward. And so what seemed to others the "sea of darkness" seemed to Columbus a sea of light. To cross that sea and find that unknown coast Columbus felt himself divinely called. And this was faith indeed. And so, what the Scripture says of Abraham we may say of Columbus: "By faith Columbus, when he was called, obeyed to go out unto a place which he was to receive for an in-

heritage; and he went out, not knowing whither he went." If Abraham was the Columbus of the twentieth century before Christ, Columbus was the Abraham of the fifteenth century after Christ.

This, then, is what made Columbus so conspicuously great. It was not the splendor of his genius—his theory was a fallacy in its science, his "discovery" was a blunder in its geography—but it was the splendor of his faith; a faith so sublime and dauntless that it enabled him to brave every discouragement, every possibility of unknown disaster. All honor, then, to Christopher Columbus, heroic Admiral of Faith's unknown Ocean!

Outline of Columbus' Service. Having thus attempted this swift outline of the career and the character of Columbus, let me now attempt an equally swift outline of his great service to mankind. Not that he was aware of this service. Emerson's oft-quoted line—"he builded better than he knew"—was probably never more finely illustrated than in the case of Columbus. He started to find a western route to Asia, and stumbled, without ever knowing it, on America. It was not till years after he died that anybody dreamed that there was any such thing as an American continent, or a New World, in distinction from the Old. Yet it is to the unique and everlasting glory of Christopher Columbus that he led the way across the Atlantic, opening a new world to mankind

—the first pilot of the westward-coming nationalities. If was a striking illustration of the truth that we seldom know when we do a really great thing.

A man's heart deviseth his way :
But Jehovah directeth his steps.

And now let us glance at some of the stupendous results flowing from that unconscious discovery by Columbus; in other words, at the providential meaning of America.

Columbus opened a New World of Physical Resources: First, the discovery of America opened up to mankind a new world of physical resources. True, the New World, physically or geologically speaking, is really older than the Old World. But, historically and potentially speaking, America, from the time of Columbus, in the matter of material resources, has really been a new world. Stretching from the Arctic to the Antarctic, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, occupying an area of fourteen million nine hundred and fifty thousand square English miles, abounding in every variety of climate, scenery, soils, vegetation, minerals, natural resources of every sort—America is indeed a new world of physical opportunities, more than answering to the ancient Chronicler's description of the Promised Land :—

“ Jehovah thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths, springing forth in valleys and hills;

a land of wheat and barley, and vines and fig trees and pomegranates ; a land of oil-olives and honey ; a land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness ; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass."

No wonder, then, that America has proved a natural reservoir for the overflowing populations of the Old World. And this leads us to our next point.

And National Re-
sources;

The discovery of America opened up to mankind a new world of national resources.

Hitherto the great nations of the world had been largely heterogeneous in their structure, admitting, it is true, foreign elements, but only partially nationalizing them. The Roman people, for example, absorbed other nations, but rarely assimilated them. Whereas the American people has been, in a unique sense, heterogeneous in its parts, yet homogeneous in its whole ; "distinct as the billows, yet one as the sea"—*E pluribus unum*. This, in fact, has been one of the secrets of our conspicuous prosperity. We have welcomed, and we still welcome, the Englishman with his sturdiness, the Scotchman with his shrewdness, the Irishman with his wit, the German with his industry, the Scandinavian with his thrift, the Frenchman with his courtesy, the Switzer with his patriotism, the Italian with his picturesqueness, the Jew with his individuality, even the Chinaman with his laundry. Nay, we even say to our brothers of Canada and the British

possessions north, Give up; and to our sisters of the American continent south, Keep not back; thus bringing our sons from far, our daughters from the end of the earth. Ay, the Moses of the New World still says to his father-in-law, the Hobab of the Old, "Come thou with us and we will do thee good." And the Hobab of the Old World has reciprocated Moses' goodness. The native American stock, enriched by these foreign grafts, has grown into the most magnificent of cedars, sending forth its branches from Maine to Texas, and its roots from Atlantic to Pacific.

But there is danger in this very prosperity. There may be such a thing as national engorgement, absorbing without assimilating, swallowing without incorporating. The American organism is beginning to outgrow its period of adolescence, and it is no longer safe to devour everything with its former youthful voracity and indifference to mastication. The time is fast approaching when we must put a check, not on immigration, but on naturalization. My countrymen, I must speak plainly, for I feel keenly. I protest against the policy (for it is politics, not statesmanship) that discriminates, on the one hand, *against* the native American, having a personal, hereditary, intelligent, patriotic interest in the land of his birth, yet compelling him to wait twenty-one years before he can vote: and that discriminates, on the other hand, *in favor of* the alien—an alien, it may be, ignorant, drunken, anarch-

ical, too poor or too venal to pay his own poll-tax, yet demanding of him a probation of only five years, and then allowing him to vote on the most tremendous problems affecting the destiny of a people in whom he has no hereditary pride, under a government in which he has no personal interest save that of a gambler watching for a lucky revolution of a roulette wheel. I know that we must not be "forgetful to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." But no duty of hospitality can be so boundless as to be forever demanding that we should entertain strangers at the expense of natives. I speak not as a politician, but as a patriot, when I protest against your levying a tariff on native Americans by lavishing free trade on un-Americanized foreigners. I believe in the patriotic pride which prompted Daniel Webster to say in the Senate: "I was born an American; I will live an American; I shall die an American."

And yet just here a word of opposite, or rather complementary, counsel is needed, and so we pass to our next point.

And International Resources; The discovery of America opened up to mankind a new world of international resources. For the American continent is, after all, but a part

of the earth; the American people is but one member, though an important member, in the one human family. Now it is the rare felicity of America that, in virtue of her geographical isolation, being laved on both coasts by mighty oceans, and also in virtue of her political isolation, being free from what Jefferson called "entangling alliances" with foreign nations, that she occupies the vantage ground of being the neutral territory of the nations, and therefore the natural and common mediator for the peoples. It is the majestic possibility of America that, looking toward the Northern Aurora, she can, as it were, extend her right hand across the Atlantic, and her left hand across the Pacific, and speak peace to the trans-oceanic races; or, as George Canning, in "The King's Message," says: "I called the New World into existence to redress the balance of the Old." But America can never realize this magnificent prerogative until she distinctly conceives herself as being not only national, but also international; not only as a great nation among other great nations, but also as a corporate, organic member of a still vaster Nation, even the body politic of Humanity, the corporation of Mankind. Now the discovery of America, by opening the two great oceans for common transit and intercourse and property, made the two hemispheres complemental, rounding the angles of the nations into the one globe of Man-

kind; thus realizing the Pauline conception of making of the old twain the one new man in Christ. And this leads us to our next point.

And Christian Re-
sources. The discovery of America opened up to mankind a new world of Christian resources.

Christian, I say, not Protestant: for this latter word is too modern and narrow and feeble, having acquired its technical meaning as late as 1529 at Speyer on the Rhine; by that very fact surrendering the case in advance to an older, but, as we think, a schismatic church. Whereas Christianity is older than Protestantism; for it was born at Jerusalem, not Rome; its only Head is Jesus, never a Peter. Accordingly, in this perpetual use of the word "Protestant," I fear that, as the Queen said to Hamlet about the lady in the play, Protestantism "protests too much, methinks." Instead then of persisting in the use of this weak term "Protestants," let us insist on the good old term originally given to the disciples at Antioch, namely, "Christians." Now Columbus, it is true, was a devout Romanist, and I for one honor him for his devoutness. I am glad that our brothers of the Latin faith have so energetically improved the opportunity of celebrating his piety in so many enthusiastic ways; I am sure that we would have done the same had Columbus been a Presbyterian.

or a Baptist. I cannot help thinking, however, how strange it is that a Church which claims to be infallible failed to discern his saintliness while living, condemning him to obloquy and poverty, yet, after four hundred years, elaborately garnishing his sepulchre. But let us be large, as becomes Christianity, and forget all such as this. Let us heartily acknowledge that Columbus was a saintly member of the Roman Catholic Church, heroically starting on his westward voyage for the devout purpose of consecrating all the treasures he might discover to the recovery of the Holy Sepulchre and the triumph of his mighty and cherished Church over all the world. From his point of view, it was a noble purpose; and nobly did he try to achieve it. All honor to Christopher Columbus for his sublime piety!

But here, as so often elsewhere, the proverb holds true: "Man proposes, but God disposes." For although Columbus made his heroic voyage in the interest of the Roman Church, yet he was, as we believe, providentially induced to change his course from westerly to southwesterly, thus landing amid Cuban and Caribbean waters; and therefore never rearing the Roman Cross on American soil. America, or at least that part of it which is controlled by the nation known as the American people, was colonized and settled by representatives of a Christianity older, and, as we believe, freer and truer than Romanism. And among the many rich boons

which these Christian colonists gave to the New World, none is richer than the boon of a free Church untrammelled by alliance with the State. Thank God, no Alexander VI. is now enthroned on the Vatican Hill, assuming the right to divide the newly-discovered western hemisphere by a Bull, as he did in 1493, "drawing a line from pole to pole west of the Azores, and giving the east to Portugal and the west to Spain." No; ours is the land of free soil, free men, free speech, free schools, and, best of all, free church. We, Christian freemen of the New World, have the blessed privilege of showing to our brethren of the Old World, chafing under the burdens of State churches, that Christianity flourishes best when freest from civic alliances and political help.

To summarize:—The discovery of America opened up to mankind a new world of physical resources; a new world of national resources; a new world of international resources; a new world of Christian resources. All praise and laud then to Christopher Columbus; for in leading the way to America the God of the nations used him as his instrument in opening to the American people a great and effectual door. In brief, America is the land of Opportunities.

Opportunity is Responsibility. And opportunity means responsibility. The very splendor of our privilege invests it with unspeakable solemnity. For privilege, if unused or if

abused, ceases to be privilege, and becomes perdition ; and the greater the privilege, the greater the perdition. Let me then, amid these brilliant demonstrations of banner and parade and oratory, summon you, my countrymen, to a new consecration. The commemoration of the discovery of America pledges the American people to Christian patriotism. For no resources of country—whether agricultural, mineral, political, or educational—if unblessed by Christianity, can save that country from relapsing, sooner or later, into barbarism. Again, this commemoration pledges the American people to Christian education. Nothing in connection with this memorable anniversary has been so beautiful or so inspiring as the prominence given to our school children in these national festivities. God bless the children of America ! But no education, however broad or however exact, that does not take into account the needs of the religious nature and the sacred possibilities of the hereafter, can save scholarship from becoming morally idiotic. Again, this commemoration pledges the American people to Christian morality. For no virtue, whether of courage, honesty, veracity, justice, chastity, temperance, generosity, self-control, unless consecrated by the spirit of the Nazarene Master, can save character from the indifference of secularism or the blankness of atheism. In fine, the commemoration of the discovery of America pledges the Ameri-

can people to Christianity itself. For no nation, whatever be the breadth of its lands, the richness of its resources, the strength of its armaments, the sagacity of its statesmanship, the amplitude of its scholarship, the warmth of its patriotism, the brilliancy of its history, the splendor of its civilization, can, under the inexorable law of the divine righteousness, hope, without the conservative help of Christianity, to escape the desolate fate that has befallen warlike Assyria, learned Egypt, classic Greece, imperial Rome.

Now therefore be wise, O ye kings :
Be instructed, ye judges of the earth.
Serve Jehovah with fear,
And rejoice with trembling.
Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish in the way,
For his wrath will soon be kindled.
Blessed are all they that put their trust in him !

Almighty God, Maker of heaven and earth, King of kings and Lord of lords, we praise thee for thy sovereignty, and bless thee for thy goodness. We thank thee that the lines have fallen to us in pleasant places, and that we have a goodly heritage. We thank thee for our civic fathers ; for their patriotism, their virtue, their wisdom, their courage, their success, their legacy. Especially do we thank thee this day for thy servant CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS ; for his faith, his energy, his steadfastness, his heroism, his discovery. May

we ever be worthy of the heroes, the benefactors, the saints, who have preceded us. Command thy blessing upon thy servants, the President of the United States, the Governor of Pennsylvania, the Mayor of Philadelphia, and all who are in authority in all the States and Territories. We pray for all who are in high place everywhere; that the nations may lead quiet lives, in all godliness and grace. May it please thee to bless every plan undertaken for the glory of thy kingdom, the prosperity of the United States, and the welfare of mankind. Be pleased to hasten the day when all ignorance shall be dispelled; when all injustice and oppression and cruelty shall be swept away; when all intemperance and covetousness and vice of every kind shall vanish; when all wars and rumors of wars shall cease; when every selfish barrier between the nations shall be broken down; when every family and every individual throughout the world shall dwell in security and joy and righteousness; when Jesus Christ thy Son shall be crowned Lord of Mankind. So shall thy way be known upon earth; thy saving health among all nations.

Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be all honor and glory and majesty for ever and ever; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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